



Private Native Forestry Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting

Approach for the annual check of evidence

Purpose

To document the approach for the annual check of the evidence base as required by the [Private Native Forestry Codes of Practice](#) (PNF codes). This approach was endorsed by the NSW Forest Monitoring Steering Committee in May 2023.

Note: this approach outlines a process that is to be applied in all annual checks, starting with the first check for the period 2022-23. It is expected that the evidence available in early checks may be somewhat limited, with a larger range of new evidence emerging over time once the PNF Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Framework (PNF MER Framework) is approved and implemented over a longer period.

Background

The PNF codes guide farm forestry practices in NSW. Section 4.3 (*Monitoring, assessment and adaptive management*) of the PNF codes require that the [NSW Forest Monitoring Steering Committee](#) (the Steering Committee) – independently chaired by the [NSW Natural Resources Commission](#) (the Commission) – propose and oversee a PNF MER Framework.

Section 4.3 also requires that the Steering Committee, independently chaired by the Commission, will:

- (a) conduct annual checks that the evidence base is up to date (including relevant maps), identify emerging evidence from monitoring and research, and opportunities for improvement
- (b) formally assess the data and evidence from the program (and any other lines of evidence) every five years and advise the Minister administering the *Forestry Act 2012*, the Minister administering the *Local Land Services Act 2013* and the Minister administering the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* whether there is sufficient evidence to warrant a review of the PNF Codes.

The first annual check will commence in April 2023 and will address the period 2022-23. The first five-yearly assessment is due in 2027 and will be informed by evidence identified during the annual checks.

Objectives

The annual checks of the evidence base will review multiple lines of evidence to identify:

- emerging evidence around private native forestry, including relevant mapping and evidence from monitoring, evaluation and research
- opportunities for improving the PNF MER Framework, including changes to monitoring and evaluation priorities and data collection.

The annual checks of the evidence base will focus on identifying emerging evidence and using this evidence to inform adaptive management of the PNF MER Framework via the implementation plan.

The nature of the identified opportunities for improvement and the capacity and resources available will determine whether it is feasible or desirable to make changes to the PNF MER Framework implementation plan and the timing of any changes or actions. The relative priority of potential changes to the PNF MER Framework implementation plan should be assessed, with high priority opportunities actioned in the next financial year (subject to available funding).

The annual checks are not intended to identify and address issues relating to the PNF code conditions or their implementation. Where emerging evidence indicates there may be opportunities to improve the PNF codes or their implementation, this evidence will be flagged for consideration as part of the formal five-year assessment process.

Evidence

Box 1 and **Figure 1** outline the sources of evidence that will be considered for the annual checks. When identifying and using this evidence, the quality of the evidence, its source and confidence in the data and findings will be considered.

Box 1: Evidence sources

Evidence may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- outputs, analysis and evaluations conducted under the PNF MER framework
- peer-reviewed and publicly available literature
- agency-commissioned reports or information sources
- interviews with relevant agency staff or subject matter experts
- expert elicitation, where relevant
- spatial products
- any proposed updates to the PNF Koala Prescription Map or underlying models.

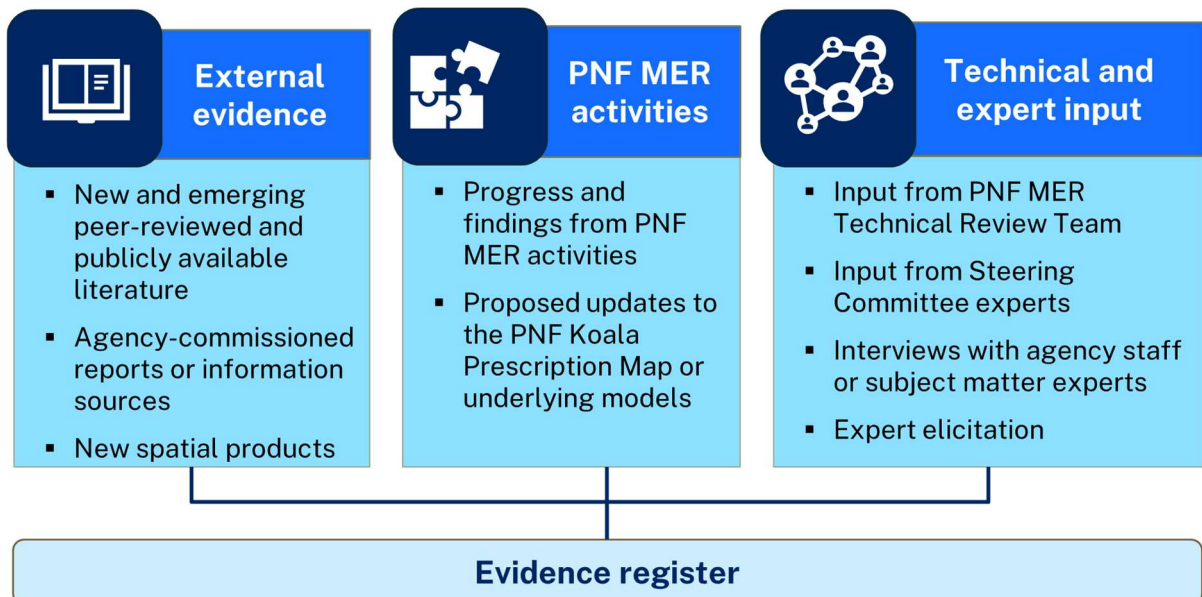


Figure 1: Evidence sources

Process

The process for the annual check is shown in **Figure 2**.

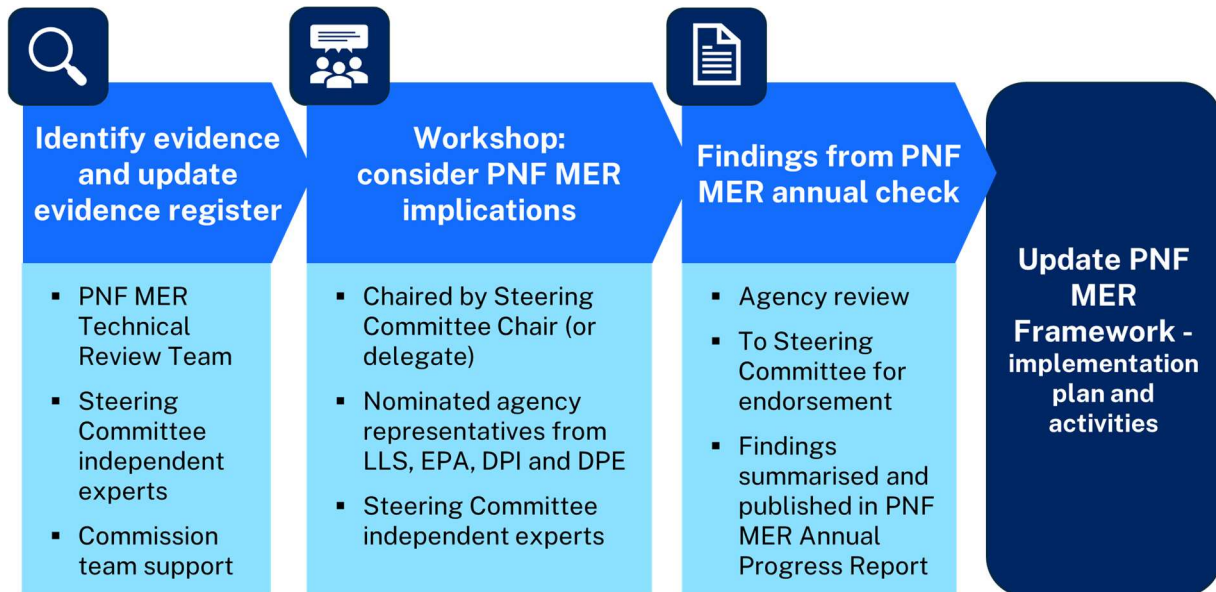


Figure 2: Process diagram

The first step involves identifying new and emerging evidence. A PNF MER Technical Review Team has been established by the Steering Committee. The Commission team will work with the Technical Review Team and Steering Committee independent experts to identify evidence to include in the annual check. Relevant evidence will be documented in an evidence register that will be developed and maintained by the Commission team.

The second step involves a workshop with nominated agency representatives and Steering Committee independent experts to consider the implications of identified evidence for the PNF MER Framework and associated monitoring and evaluation activities. This workshop will be chaired by the independent Chair of the Steering Committee (or delegate). The Commission team will provide nominated agency representatives with the evidence register in advance of the annual check of the evidence base workshop. The evidence register will be used to guide discussions at the workshop.

During the workshop, agency representatives – with input from independent experts – will:

- consider the new and emerging evidence
- carry out a risk-based consideration of knowledge gaps and monitoring priorities
- identify if there any issues that need to be addressed and potential actions or requirements, for example whether:
 - further evidence is required and options for addressing knowledge gaps
 - changes to the PNF MER Framework may be necessary
 - any evidence is to be flagged for consideration at the five yearly review
- prioritise issues and potential actions (high, medium or low priority) based on an assessment of feasibility and associated risks.

Draft findings from the workshop, including recommended changes to the PNF MER Framework implementation plan, activities and/or priorities, will be captured by the Commission team and provided to agency representatives for review and feedback. The

annual check findings will then be provided to the Steering Committee as part of the PNF MER Framework annual progress report for endorsement, noting that, if necessary, final decisions may be made by the Commission as the independent chair of the Steering Committee.

Further information on the reporting process is provided in a separate section below.

Tasks and timelines

Table 1 outlines the tasks and timelines for the annual check of the evidence base.

Table 1: Tasks and timing for the annual check

Task	Timing
1 Commission team works with the PNF MER Technical Review Team and Steering Committee independent experts to carry out a scan for new evidence and MER findings to date and update evidence register accordingly	April
2 Steering Committee representatives from LLS, EPA, DPI and DPE nominate a suitable agency representative(s) to participate in the workshop	April
3 Commission team provides evidence register to workshop participants in advance for input and feedback ahead of the workshop	May
4 Annual check of the evidence base workshop Overseen by the independent Chair of the Steering Committee (or delegate), supported by the Commission team, and involving nominated agency representatives and Steering Committee independent experts	May
5 Based on workshop outcomes, the Commission team develops a draft summary of findings for the annual check of the evidence base and sends to nominated agency representatives for review and feedback	June
6 The Commission team finalises the summary of findings of the annual check and includes it in the annual progress report for the PNF MER Framework	July
7 The Commission provides the annual progress report for the PNF MER Framework to the Steering Committee for endorsement	July
8 The Commission, on behalf of the Steering Committee: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ provides the summary of findings of the annual check to the CEOs of Local Land Services and the Environment Protection Authority and the Secretary of the Department of Planning and Environment as part of the annual progress report for the PNF MER Framework ▪ notifies relevant Ministers that the check has been completed 	July

Roles and responsibilities

The annual evidence check is overseen by the Commission as the independent chair of Steering Committee. The **Commission team** will assist with the following:

- seeking input from the PNF MER Technical Review Team and Steering Committee independent experts to identify new and emerging evidence

- populating and maintaining the evidence register based on Technical Review Team and Steering Committee independent expert input
- supporting the annual check of the evidence base workshop
- consulting with relevant agency staff before and after workshop as required
- preparing a summary of findings of the annual check of the evidence base based on workshop outcomes
- seeking feedback on draft findings from relevant agencies and endorsement of final findings by the Steering Committee
- ensuring key findings from the annual check are communicated in the annual progress report for the PNF MER Framework.

The **PNF MER Technical Review Team** will participate in the scan for new evidence and MER findings to date.

The **Steering Committee independent experts** will provide input to the scan for new evidence and MER findings and participate in the workshop.

Nominated agency representatives will participate in the workshop. Steering Committee representatives from the following agencies will nominate a suitable agency representative(s) to participate in this process:

- Local Land Services
- Environment Protection Authority
- Department of Primary Industries (Forest Policy)
- Department of Planning and Environment.

It is expected that nominated agency representatives will:

- consider the evidence register ahead of the workshop
- attend and contribute to the workshop
- contribute to follow-up discussions, including identification of emerging evidence needs and implications, and options for addressing priority issues
- provide timely input when asked to review the draft summary of findings.

Reporting

The summary of findings and recommendations from the annual check will be included in the annual progress report prepared under the PNF MER Framework.

The Commission team will present the PNF MER Framework annual progress report to the CEOs of Local Land Services and the Environment Protection Authority and to the Secretary of the Department of Planning and Environment on behalf of the Steering Committee. The Commission will notify relevant Ministers by letter that the annual check has been conducted.

The Commission will publish the PNF MER Framework annual progress report – including the summary of findings and recommendations from the annual check – on its website.